

Nome Public Workshops Summary

April 24 and 25, 2024

Nome Coordinated Research Consortium*

Table of Contents	Page
Introduction	1
A. OVERARCHING THEMES	2
Infrastructure and Economics	2
Communications	2
Who Decides	2
Who Benefits	2
Culture and Subsistence	3
Invitation and Reporting Back	3
Disclaimer	3
Word Cloud	4
B. SUMMARY BY TOPIC	4
Economics	4
Government	9
Society	11
Environment	12
C. WRITTEN NOTES FROM THE WORKSHOP	13
List of NCRC Researchers	27

Introduction

On April 24 and 25, the Nome Coordinated Research Consortium (NCRC, a group of researchers representing four research projects), organized two public workshops in Nome (*Sitŋasuaq*), Alaska for the purpose of sharing results of previous work and asking different constituencies to share their perceptions about the most important changes. Nome is facing unprecedented social, economic, and environmental changes. This dynamic situation brings both challenges and opportunities for Nome. Successfully addressing the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities requires adaptive local governance and sustained involvement of the different constituencies in the community, in addition to state and federal support. To have a meaningful involvement of Nome’s citizens requires “safe” spaces (formal and informal) where they can voice their concerns about current and future development. This document reports on one of NCRC’s efforts to create spaces that enable the local community to express their concerns and perspectives about the future.

A total of 32 residents attended the workshops including a diversity of age, gender, Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, tribal organizations, businesses, and elected officials. The conversations were conducted in English, not recorded, characterized by openness, and critical constructive spirit. This summary aims to capture the public workshops by organizing the comments into three parts. Section A is a two-page short summary of the overarching themes

and how NCRC plans to distribute the draft report. Section B is a more detailed summary by topic, and Section C is a list of comments from the participants (the raw data that informs the report).

A. OVERARCHING THEMES

Infrastructure and economics. Participants expressed concern that port expansion, more mining, and increased tourism would exacerbate issues surrounding the current level of infrastructure, such as a shortage of affordable and accessible housing (number one concern), poor road conditions, and insufficient airport capacity. The lack of current infrastructure causes social, economic and workforce issues. Although there was no consensus about the proposed port expansion, the general hope was that Nome would evolve into a more stable and predictable economy benefiting local residents. Other concerns focused on the high cost of living. Several participants mentioned that many people earn salaries in the Nome area, but live in other parts of Alaska, typically near Anchorage. Much of the wealth generated in Nome flows out of the area. For Nome to develop, there needs to be more people collecting income who both work and live in Nome, and wealth needs to be funneled back into the community.

Communications. Participants believe there is insufficient transparency in decision making about current and proposed projects, and the relationship between tribal organizations and decision makers surfaced as areas of concern. As the area faces constant development, it is vital that communication is also maintained. Additionally, the city will need improved signage that is culturally appropriate, such as road signs and other signs in Indigenous languages, for both the long-term residents and the expected influx of tourists.

Who decides? Concerns related to local government decision-making processes. There needs to be more focus on Indigenous issues with greater participation by Indigenous agencies and committees in current and future conversations and planning for developing tourism, the port, mining, and infrastructure. Also, considering the number of federal issues and activity, the lack of federal agencies with offices in Nome was mentioned.

Who benefits? Participants are concerned and have questions about how local residents can take advantage of the proposed port expansion, mining, and tourism while minimizing the impacts. For example, cultural tourism could provide an opportunity for Nome-area residents to generate income from selling crafts while educating a broader population about local Indigenous history, traditions, and values.

Subsistence. A central concern was protecting the ability of subsistence hunters and fishers to continue their work. Participants expressed concern that there are decreasing numbers of subsistence animals for harvest and that fewer birds and fish are collected each year.

Participants noted that subsistence needs to be a priority, even for the boats using the port. Regarding the proposed mine, there were similar concerns. Participants suggested that mines should not crowd out subsistence areas. The increased number of tourists might also have negative impacts on the local environment and society. Some participants called for improved subsistence access in the sense that all boats must respect subsistence areas.

Culture. Participants voiced several innovative ideas about how Nome's cultural life could benefit from increased tourism, including increased opportunities for sales, more theater spaces, and expanded infrastructure. Immediate needs for help from the government with regard to the incoming cruise ship (1900 tourists expected June 21, 2024) are bathrooms, EMS services, protection for land/air/ocean wildlife, and solid waste management.

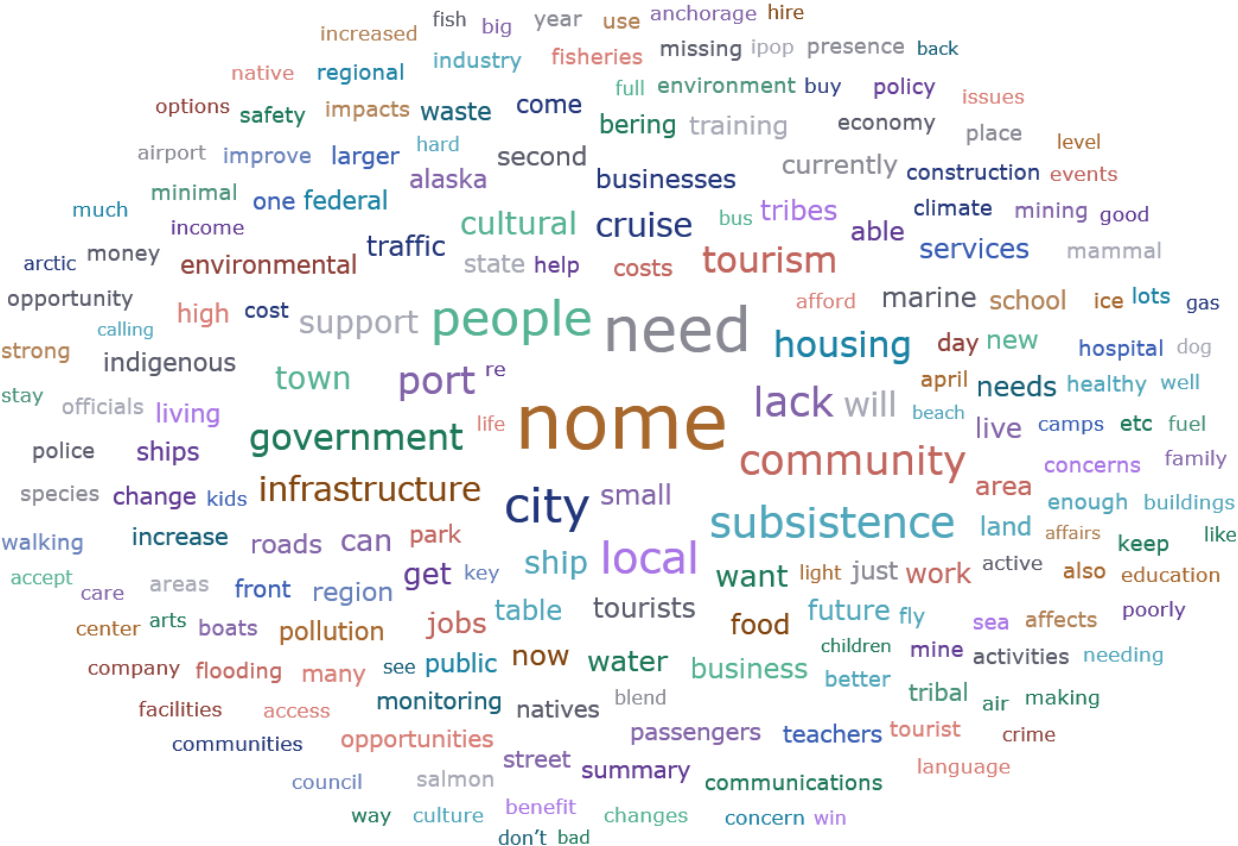
Invitation and reporting back to the community

Participants were invited to the workshop public meetings by advertisements in the Nome Nugget, local Facebook groups, KNOM radio, and by word-of-mouth. The NCRC will report back to the Nome community about what we heard from its residents. We plan to provide summaries in person and through written academic and non-academic reports, including this one. We will distribute the summaries to individuals who participated in the research, and others such as: the City of Nome Mayor and Manager, Kawerak, UAF/Northwest Campus, and the Nome Eskimo Community and other Indigenous groups.

Disclaimer

The findings reported here reflect the conversations we had on April 24 and 25, 2024. They are by no means comprehensive or representative since we were only able to talk to a few people. We have not had time to check the assertions reported here. Much more research is needed. Nevertheless, we thought it would be useful for community members to provide a quick and timely summary of our initial findings in the hopes that they will inspire further conversation about Nome and its future development. We are grateful to all the Nomeites who shared their time and ideas with us.

Word Cloud of April 24 and 25 Conversations



B. SUMMARY BY TOPICS

The two sessions brought together a group of Nomites who are deeply committed to their community and addressing the challenges that it faces. Here we lay out the main points community members made during the conversations. While the conversations were largely organic and free flowing, we have divided the themes into specific topics for greater analytical clarity. In the summary below, we paraphrase and use some direct quotes indicated by quotation marks in order to convey the meaning of the community input. For all the actual comments, see Section C.

Economy

1. Participants expressed a hope that the Nome economy would evolve into something that is predictable and stable with a “sustained, positive impact on local people.” Participants called for “community agreements with mining and tourism that benefit the community maintaining and building a healthy community identity.” There is hope that development will create more commercial businesses, restaurants, health care, and

grocery stores and provide more opportunities for them. It would also lower construction costs and fuel prices. Economic development is also anticipated to provide growing opportunities for the community, with the port development benefiting Nome and the region by helping to preserve local culture. The port is also expected to provide opportunities to attract healthy, happy young people to the area. Economic development is also expected to improve road conditions, provide avenues for local collaboration and creativity, strengthen the internet, and even provide spots for food truck areas similar to ones in Fairbanks.

2. While Nome wages are generally high compared to more urbanized parts of Alaska, the cost of living is also very high and home heating fuel and food prices are unaffordable. Two years ago, the price of oil used to heat homes doubled from \$3 to \$6. One resident claimed that “It costs \$4000 to \$5000 a month to heat [their] house, which is two times the mortgage.” Many people can’t afford to live here, and many teachers and police are leaving. Income stratification is stressing families and services, meaning that schools or nonprofits are not able to compete with corporate wages. As a result, Nome also needs greater food security and food sovereignty.
3. A top concern was the need for more housing, a diversified market with a range of prices, and particularly affordable housing. Frequently, housing is not available for those seeking to settle in the area (“No housing for the people who live here long term,” one participant said). Some pointed out that it would be desirable to remove some dilapidated buildings to make space for new homes. At least one noted that property taxes were high.
4. The expansion of the Nome port, the development of new mines, and the potential for increased tourism provide opportunities for economic growth in the area. However, Nomeites still have many concerns about how to take advantage of these opportunities while minimizing any costs.
5. Many residents expressed the need for the development of infrastructure alongside economic growth. People are struggling to expand infrastructure addressing social, housing, and unemployment issues, according to multiple residents. Several people pointed out that the existing infrastructure was overtaxed and that it was insufficient for potential growth. Particular areas of infrastructure weakness included water/sewer/roads/electric. The current status of the roads drew considerable comment. Often the roads are too dusty and full of potholes. The deficiencies here raised questions about safety.
 - a. While flooding has long been an issue for Nome, Typhoon Merbok (September 17, 2022) served as a reminder of the damage future storms may inflict and the increasing possibility of annual flooding. One participant called for a “better seawall that can prevent, and improve after, flooding events.” There are also

concerns about rising sea levels, with one participant asking “How much will water levels rise with the rising temperatures?”

- b. Nome’s public buildings, business establishments, and personal residences all need improvement. There also needs to be improvements in the roads and sidewalks, and more parking spaces need to be installed as traffic increases. These upgrades would help to improve dust control. Residents would also like to have the option for more bike and car rentals. There are also insufficient sidewalks and bike lanes.
 - c. An influx of more tourists requires the creation of more public restrooms and washaterias. One participant noted that Nome is coming to a crossroads with the potential arrival of more tourists and will need to implement comprehensive change: “we cannot support ourselves any more with how we are now.”
 - d. The city will need improved signage that is culturally appropriate, such as road signs and other signs in Indigenous languages.
 - e. There should also be more spaces for the performing arts.
6. Increasing the number of tourists would also require more infrastructure. Participants repeatedly voiced the need for public restrooms, roads and sidewalk improvement, widespread acknowledgement of the presence of Indigenous Peoples sharing their cultural knowledge and expressions, and efforts to connect visitors with local vendors. In addition, to combat concerns surrounding cruise ship trash and sewage waste, Nome should accept the waste coming off of the cruise ships and charge a fee for disposing of it properly.
- a. Meeting and waiting areas, such as at the airport, should be upgraded in order to welcome the tourists at a level they expect. Several noted that the airport currently is too small and doesn’t support fluctuation of traffic. An expanded airport with a cafe for passengers and the people meeting or dropping them off would be welcome for many.
 - b. Improved transportation services, such as Uber, Lyft, and shuttles would help with the influx of visitors.
7. There are mixed feelings in town about the port, with no overwhelming consensus one way or the other. People see both the benefits and costs of the new construction. One participant pointed out that there will always be “individuals calling for isolation,” seeking to preserve the distance between Nome and the rest of the world. Yet others note that the port is very important for the nation given the geopolitical context. A key question is what the port construction will mean for the marine wildlife. [Arctic Watch](#) will help to monitor this.

8. One participant called for greater economic diversification. "Nome is currently a hospital town. I want Nome to be more than just a hospital and port town. I want Nome to be a center of research, with strong educational facilities. Nome could have it all."
9. There was support for expanding Nome's status as a hub and to really develop that role. Along these lines, one participant noted that the Alaska Marine Highway system ferries should come to Nome at least once a year. We should have barges on a regular basis. Currently there is only one barge company left, according to one participant. More ferries would allow vehicles to be barged in for \$1500 rather than \$5000. Cheaper services would mean a higher quality of life. Building a Costco or something similar would increase shopping trips from the surrounding villages. Nome also needs logistics facilities so that goods can be shipped to Nome, reorganized and then shipped out to the villages. Many houses are now being built in Anchorage and then shipped up to Nome.
10. Mining has been a part of Nome's economy since the city was founded. While gold mining will not disappear, there is concern about the arrival of Graphite One. One worry is that acid water from the mine will flow into the Imuruk Basin potentially injuring the red salmon there, which would impact local food supply. The anticipated truck traffic in town is also a major concern. Since the old bypass has now been incorporated into town, it is not clear how the trucks would reach the port without going through the city. A further concern was the construction of man camps on the edge of town, potentially creating safety issues. One participant called for greater accountability from these camps. One person said "Graphite One - too much risk and not enough benefit." Another pointed out that the IPOP mine would hurt the local river ecosystem.
11. There was a lot of discussion of jobs in the area. Currently, there are many open jobs, but it was not clear if people currently experiencing unemployment were interested in these jobs or qualified for them. For example, some noted a lack of interest in seasonal work. Participants requested more information about the job situation.
12. Participants expressed concern about the lack of a regional vocational training facility. Given that there were lots of private sector jobs available, there is a need for a trade school at the local level.
13. Others pointed out that not all Nomites were committed to working or consistent in their efforts to maintain their jobs. One participant noted a lack of a work ethic and that people get tired of their jobs.
14. Another problem is that the cost of living is so high that small businesses struggle to balance between providing living wages and making enough of a profit to stay in business. The result is high turnover in employees who frequently seek higher wages, which adds an additional burden on the small businesses.

15. A key problem for Nome is the many people who earn their salaries in the area, but live in other parts of Alaska, typically near Anchorage. Much of the wealth generated in Nome flows out of the area. For Nome to develop, there needs to be more people collecting income who both work and live in Nome.
16. The Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC) is the major employer in Nome. Some participants suggested that the city needed more health care options and other medical facilities in addition to NSHC. One participant called for using the medical facilities to provide training services to the villages.
17. Many participants stressed that all new opportunities should prioritize local hires where they are available. These efforts should focus on hiring locals at all levels, not just low paying jobs.
18. There was some concern about the byproducts of successful growth in Nome. More industry opportunities will lead to more money/higher incomes, which, in turn, can lead to more people moving into town. Under this scenario, long-term residents may not be able to afford housing, as cost of living may increase further than it already has.
19. Cultural Tourism provides an opportunity for Nome-area residents to generate income from selling crafts while educating a broader population about local Indigenous history, traditions, and values.
 - a. Participants said that the Tribes should take the lead in developing policy and regulations for the use of Corporation land.
 - b. Inter-cooperation and intertribal involvement should be promoted so that all Tribes have an opportunity to benefit economically. Additionally, villages in the areas surrounding Nome should be included in greater collaboration.
 - c. In order for Nome to benefit from increased tourism, the tourists need to spend more money in the city. Currently, there is no revenue from cruise ship passengers for most small local businesses. At a time when major preparations are needed to absorb the influx of tourists, there is very little support from state and local government for tourism businesses in Nome. There needs to be more places for artists to sell their wares. To benefit from cruise ship passengers, vendors may need to learn about and try out various avenues for accepting payment, and know when to charge wholesale vs retail prices to maximize profit. Efforts to develop e-commerce would also contribute to regional development. In order to maximize small business opportunities, tourists should be educated about what they should be able to buy from small businesses and what they can and cannot bring across the border. EU regulations prohibiting the imports of walrus ivory, for example, prevent European tourists from purchasing crafts with marine mammal parts.

- d. The growing tourism should provide a space for cultural presentations. Tribe knowledge-holders can develop protocols, including cultural presentations, that can be taught at all levels throughout the tourism sector in Nome. The representation of the cultures should be accurate and contemporary. The National Park Service should provide this information as well.
 - e. Boats and vehicles involved in the growing tourism sector should develop protocols to avoid interfering with subsistence food gathering. Here the Marine Mammal Act (MMA) regulations can be taken into account.
 - f. The tourism business can support local Indigenous languages and help promote their usage. Part of this effort could be teaching these languages to cultural vendors. More training and support for cultural tourism is needed.
 - g. To expand the presence of tourists during the off season and create year-round rather than seasonal jobs, we need to encourage and market Nome for tourism in winter. There also were calls to expand the opportunities for ecotourism.
 - h. The cruise ships could provide job training to local youth who would then have the ability to work on the ships.
 - i. Finally, in order to cover the expenses for these activities, the tourist industry can pay a tax which would support Nome cultural activities.
20. A final question that needs to be addressed is how will cruise passengers put strain and wear and tear on infrastructure that cannot be covered by passenger fees?

Government

1. At least one participant pointed out that the key to successful government is to have strong checks and balances. There were calls for “more action/activity from city leaders/elected officials.” There were also calls for “meaningful participation in the city government by the full community.” and that “All Bering Strait Region communities [should be] represented in decisions.” One participant suggested the slogan: “High latitude, green attitude. It all starts with a thought.”
2. At least one participant commented that the “city is poorly managed and needs new leadership.” Another comment read “Lack of/poor leadership for many local entities.” Some also noted an issue with local government officials not having personal interests or residence in Nome. One suggested more elections/shorter terms for city officials and forensic auditing of all local government offices.
3. One participant pointed out the problem of “Figureheads making 6 figures.” Many believe people earning a high income and making decisions in the region need to live here full time.
4. Residents believe there needs to be more focus on Indigenous issues, and greater participation in the decision-making process by Indigenous agencies and committees in

current and future ongoing conversations and planning for tourism, port expansion, mining, and infrastructure. Part of this process would be building and maintaining a strong Indigenous cultural narrative. One participant also believes that there needs to be more cooperation among Indigenous people and settlers, pointing out that “Nome needs more blending: Nome started mostly with White, Natives came into the city, now we need to blend.”

5. A key area for increased interaction from Indigenous groups and individuals would be in environmental policy-making. For example, regulations recommended from the Tribes should be written into policies about air, land, and water. Further input at all levels should come from the Mammal Commissions (Polar Bear, Caribou, Reindeer, Ice Seal, Whaling (Bowhead, Beluga) as well as from the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC).
6. The Bering Intergovernmental Tribal Advisory Council (BITAC) is now becoming more active. It was created by President Obama, disappeared under President Trump, and was restored by President Biden. Members met in Washington, DC last week working with the Bering Task Force. The current priority is the salmon resilience plan, where council members are trying to figure out how to fund resiliency efforts. In the future, BITAC will work on a much broader range of issues, developing strong tribal-industry cooperation in particular. Similarly, there should be greater use of traditional knowledge alongside scientific knowledge.
7. Another common theme was the disjointed nature of government, with calls for the city government and tribes to work together more. There needs to be strong local and regional coordination. Currently, there is an overall lack of coordination among the different governments and jurisdictions in the area. For example, in the past Nome did not accept the waste that was generated outside of its borders. All of these systems working together would help facilitate more business and generate more revenue.
 - a. Establishing a borough would help to facilitate these kinds of services. One participant noted that his family lives 11 miles outside of town because they cannot afford to live in town, which means that they cannot vote in city elections or for the school board.
8. At the state level, the focus is generally on developing the railbelt area, and there is a lack of support for the rural areas.
9. Multiple participants noted a lack of federal presence in Nome despite so many issues that need addressing, including the military, commercial and subsistence fishing, EAS-listed species, and spill response. One noted, however, that an increased military presence would create a potential target on Nome.
10. Additionally, participants sought more transparency in their government and more relevant communications to the public. Currently, many residents feel that there is poor communication from the local government with the community. Some noted that there is a lack of structure, and few avenues for the broader community to express concerns

or provide feedback, creating a divide and lack of support. One called for more assessments of the local government from the community point of view.

11. Policing was an issue that came up frequently. Participants noted that the police department was poorly staffed, claiming that not many were trained and there was limited permanent staff.
 - a. At least one participant called for “caring law enforcement who looks out for my kids & my safety.”
12. Some complained that the local government does not provide sufficient support for local business. At the moment, the City of Nome doesn’t seem to have plans for infrastructure, or the money and responsibility for addressing these issues. Among the most pressing tasks are:
 - a. All of Front Street, which many residents believe currently has a feeling of hopelessness, needs to be revitalized to make it a visually appealing and welcoming place during unsafe weather (perhaps by raising buildings to reduce threat of flooding) as well as a safe place for people experiencing homelessness (assuming it makes sense to do that)
 - b. There should also be a plan for a new downtown.
 - c. Nome also needs easy beach access, such as what exists with the Kotzebue boardwalk promenade.
 - d. Some buildings in town have been vacant for 20 years. They should be renovated or replaced.
13. 1900 tourists are expected June 21, 2024. Immediate help is needed from the government to clean up the appearance of the city, and to provide more bathrooms, EMS services, protection for land/air/ocean wildlife, and solid waste management.
14. There are questions about what ordinances the city can instate to proactively regulate cruise ship traffic, passenger numbers, vessel emissions and discharges?
15. There should be greater accessibility for disabled citizens
16. Given the overall difficult situation with Russia, there is a lack of transboundary communications with Chukotka
17. One participant recommended using the services of Michael Fredericks at [SALT](#) for thinking about the future of Nome. Her company facilitates collaboratory design processes

Society

- The government needs to improve its emergency response capacity to better address problems with Murdered and Missing Indigenous Peoples and human trafficking. Such support is also needed for search and rescue on water, land, and internationally.

- One participant stressed that Nome should strive for a “family friendly” feeling. Many want to keep Nome’s smalltown feel, including an ability to find quality things to do within walking distance.
- Community members have also expressed preference for a situation where people are able to work where they live. Fifty percent of the people who work in the Nome jail are fly in/fly out. There are traveling nurses who fly in, earn money, then leave. This situation negatively impacts local business. These people live in Wasilla and other areas around Anchorage, but earn a \$150,000 salary in Nome. They earn high rural Alaska salaries living in Nome and are able to buy a big house in the Anchorage area. One consequence of this is that infrastructure maintenance costs are falling on Nome residents when the infrastructure is created for a larger transient population.
- One participant suggested that instead of providing new hires with hiring bonuses, employers should give out retention bonuses to keep experienced employees willing to continue to do their jobs, thereby providing incentives for experienced workers to stay in Nome.
- Another important concern was relations between the settlers and Native population, as Alaska native people are not always treated well. It was suggested that “people should follow the golden rule.”
- There was a strong focus on improving the situation for kids. The education system needs improvement and residents expressed that they would be glad to have the support of non-natives for that. In the elementary schools there are new immersion native language programs, but unfortunately the two teachers in this program did not renew their contracts for the next academic year. It is important to teach culture to the kids. Currently, the governor is cutting the education system and teachers are leaving. One participant pointed out that religious missionaries took away a lot of the local culture when they came into the area.
- At least one participant called for more child care.
- There were also calls for more people/families healing from substance abuse and the creation of more sober centers.
- Community members would also like outdoor fields to play in in the summertime.

Environment

1. The most frequently expressed goal was to minimize environmental impacts from development in order to help subsistence food supplies (especially salmon, waterfowl, crab) thrive for local people.
2. Environmentally, the participants voiced concern about a decrease in subsistence food, including from changed migration patterns and Russian fisheries in the Bering Sea interfering with Nome’s subsistence food supplies. More port activities would have

impacts on subsistence food supplies, but this damage could be offset by requiring a space for hunters at the port. There are also concerns that additional visitors coming into Nome through the port might increase crime, diseases, and affect the food supplies. The participants expressed a hope for no degradation of the environment.

3. Nome and the surrounding communities do not have complete control over environmental conditions as they are impacted by activity in the Bering Sea beyond their control.
4. Climate change is affecting federal and state fisheries, likely leading to a reduction in resources. There was concern about an increase in algal blooms. To maintain subsistence fishing, communities need clear, healthy, and robust populations of marine resources. With official regulatory monitoring, what data are there, and where can this data be found? How can this data be made more accessible to impacted communities?
5. Currently, the relevant federal agencies do not have enough of a presence in Nome to address the issues that need attention. For example, there is no monitoring of ship noise in and on the water; ship strikes, light pollution, and entanglements. There is also no monitoring of ship traffic impacts on ice. Similarly, there is no monitoring of marine debris.
6. A central concern was protecting the ability of subsistence hunters and fishers to continue their work. Participants expressed concern that there are decreasing numbers of subsistence animals for harvest and that fewer birds and fish are collected each year. Participants noted that subsistence needs to be a priority, even for the boats using the port. They called for improved subsistence access in the sense that all boats must respect subsistence areas. Additionally, residents believe the port company should support hunters by providing money for gas to hunt.
 - a. On land, there were similar concerns. Participants suggested that mines should not crowd out subsistence areas.
7. The increased number of tourists might also have negative impacts on the local environment and society. Among the concerns were increased pressure on the already limited supply of housing. Another hazard would be the spread of infectious diseases. A further concern expressed was the possibility of increased crime rates and drug usage. The increased numbers of people could also lead to more noise in populated areas. Such concerns could necessitate increased policing, to ensure that visitors remain in compliance with local laws and guidelines. Increased tourism could also have negative implications for wild birds.
8. Another potential problem identified was that tourists and fly in/fly out workers might end up unexpectedly stuck in Nome if they miss their boats and planes or there is extreme weather. Their presence could adversely affect the local food supply and the ability of the food bank to provide the kind of support that it usually does.

9. There is some concern about the environmental impacts of future projects. For example, some participants noted the possibility of Nome hosting an Arctic gas station. As of now, there is only vague information about the project and what its effects would be.

Culture

1. Some community members expressed interest in placing Alaska Natives on board cruise ships to educate visitors on Indigenous history and traditions, and how to follow cultural protocols and policies from various regional Tribes. This increased communication could result in a variety of positive impacts, including helping to increase tourists spending money at vendors in the area.
2. Participants expressed the need for more tribal voices in public policy making processes. What are the cultural/tourism opportunities that the tribes want to see developed?
3. Additionally, there was a call for more public education. For example, people need help to understand the implications of the changes that are taking place in the climate and in society at large. There also needs to be more public education about Indigenous affairs. However, such work needs a steady stream of resources and one participant noted “Good luck maintaining it.”
4. Some suggested the schools introducing a tourism and construction focus in secondary school so that Nome would have more of its own people working locally.
5. Other suggestions for local improvement include murals, a city bus loop, an assisted living facility, meditation parks, and a dog park, and changing the name of the state park to Ada Blackjack State Park. Residents also expressed the need for a big map of downtown to better envision the future of the city.

C. WRITTEN NOTES FROM THE WORKSHOPS

This section contains the transcribed comments written down during the workshops. At each workshop of approximately 16 individuals, people sat together with about 5 individuals at each table. For a few of the tables, we provide a summary of the table conversation and additional context. In one case, a member of the research team transcribed the comments of the discussion at the table.

Table 1 April 24, 2024 Noon

Summary and Context: This table included all Alaska Natives, 4-6 participants. They focused on Tribal monitoring since they felt there needed to be more Indigenous issues included in the report. The participants first identified agencies and commissions who should be actively involved in current and future ongoing conversations and planning for tourism, port planning, mining, and infrastructure. The participants brainstormed ideas for improving opportunities to

attract tourists to Nome by having Alaska Natives on board ships to educate visitors, ensure the implementation of cultural protocols and have policies come from various Tribes, and improve communication. Additionally, the participants supported increased education for economic opportunities between cruise ships and vendors. Environmentally, the participants voiced concern about international activities affecting Nome. Concerned about the impacts on subsistence, residents felt including a space for hunters at the port may help to protect such activities. There were additional concerns about the influx of visitors coming into Nome and the potential for this to increase crime, diseases, and affect the food supplies. In regards to infrastructure, participants repeatedly voiced the need for public restrooms, improving the roads and sidewalks, acknowledging the presence of Indigenous Peoples sharing their cultural knowledge and expressions, and connecting the visitors with local vendors. Below we transcribe the comments that participants wrote on posters at the event.

Environment

- IGAP (Environmental Protection Agency's Indian General Assistance Program)
- Regulation (regulations should come from the Tribes and written into policy about air, land, and water)
 - Air
 - Land
 - Water
 - Policy
- Mammal Commissions (these commissions should be active at all levels)
 - Walrus
 - Polar Bear
 - Beluga
 - Caribou
 - Reindeer
 - Ice Seal
 - Whaling (Bowhead, Beluga)
 - ICC (Inuit Circumpolar Council)

Tourism

- Cultural Tourism
- Corporation land regulation/Policy (Policy must come from the Tribes)
- Cultural Protocols (protocols need to be taught at all levels, including cultural presentations)
 - Inter-cooperation and intertribal involvement (all Tribes should have an opportunity for cultural presentations)
- Accurate representation (cultures should be accurate and contemporary)

- Subsistence interference (no interference from any boats)
- Language support, promotion (teach language to cultural vendors)
- MMA (Marine Mammal Act) regulation
- Park Service Information
- Payment Opportunity (tourist industry can pay a tax which goes to Nome Cultural activities)
- Pricing (educating vendors about difference between resale and wholesale)
- Surrounding communities (more collaboration)
- E-commerce (should help Tribes)
- Small business opportunities (tourist should be educated about what they can and cannot bring across the border, and they should be able to buy from small businesses and educate vendors about various avenues for accepting payments)

Environmental

- International interference (what happens across the Bering Sea affects Alaska)
- Subsistence impacts (subsistence needs to be a priority, even at the port for boats)
- Local hire, employee availability (need to hire locals at all levels, not just low paying jobs)
- Improve subsistence access (all boats must respect subsistence areas)
- Port company applied subsistence fund, supporting hunters (funds should be given to hunters for gas to hunt for family and community members)
- Mining overcrowding (mines should not be in subsistence areas)
- Increased policing (all need to be in compliance with active policing)
- Crime rates, drugs (this is a realistic potential hazard)
- Miners and tourists stuck in Nome (what happens if miners and tourists miss their boats and planes - this affects the food bank access)
- Limited housing
- Infectious diseases
- Noise increase (just like Juneau's increase of helicopters)

Infrastructure

- Flooding (more flooding every year and Merbok)
- Public, business, personal (all need improvement)
- Artist economy (need spaces for local artists to sell)
- Public bathroom and washateria
- Signage that is culturally appropriate (road signs and other signs in Indigenous languages, such as Inupiat)

- Performing Arts, meeting/waiting area (there needs to be an inviting place for performing arts)
- Needing larger spaces (this is for meetings, etc.)
- Parking spaces
- Roads and sidewalks (need more and improvements)
- Emergency Response
 - Murdered and Missing Indigenous Peoples, human trafficking
 - Water, land, international
- Dust Control
- Transportation (Uber, shuttles, etc.)

Table 2 April 24 at Noon

Jobs

- Lots of open jobs
- Maybe open jobs do not appeal to the unemployed
- What is our unemployment rate? Information needed
- Missing: No regional training/vocational facility
- Missing: consistency and commitment to working
- Lack of interest in seasonal work
- Lots of private sector jobs; we need trade school at the local level
- Need regional trade school for adults in our region
- Cost of living is so high that small businesses struggle to balance providing living wages and making enough of a profit to stay in business. Results in high turnover, which adds an additional burden to business
- Need more people collecting income to live and work in Nome
- Tourists must spend money in Nome, not just take up space.
- Why no tourism category [in this sheet]
- Need more health care options/other medical facilities, NOT NSHC
- Summary: trade schools, regional training, tourists need to spend

Environment

- Climate change is affecting federal fisheries
- Climate change affects state fisheries
- Now - relatively clean! But climate change is impacting resources
- Lack of relevant federal presence in Nome
- No monitoring of ship noise in and on the water; ship strikes, light pollution, entanglements

- We are looking at hosting an Arctic gas station
- No idea of effects, vague information
- Federal and state subsistence fisheries. We need clear healthy robust populations of marine resources. With official regulatory monitoring, what data are there? Where?
- Ship traffic impacts on ice - not monitored
- Decreasing subsistence animals for harvest; fewer birds and fish collected each year
- No monitoring of marine debris
- Want to see No degradation of the environment
- Summary: want healthy ecosystem, lack of monitoring for light pollution, noise pollution, ESA-species, trash, zoonotic diseases, etc; sea ice in/on/under

Culture

- Need more voice for tribes
- People need help to understand the implications of the changes.
- More public education needed for Indigenous affairs
- Good luck maintaining it
- What are the cultural/tourism opportunities that the tribes want?

Tourism

- No revenue from cruise ship passengers for most small local businesses
- We cannot support any more with how we are now
- Very little support from state and local government for businesses in tourism in Nome
- Major prep need to absorb influx
- Need more training and support for cultural tourism within our region
- We need to encourage and market Nome for tourism in winter
- Implications to wildlife birds
- Summary: We cannot support what we have now; need to market Nome winter season; what do tribes want in regard to tourism, need more training for cultural issues; need more dollars from ship passengers for business

Government

- Lack of federal presence in Nome re: military, fishers (commercial and subsistence), spill response, EAS-listed species
- Lack of federal presence despite so many issues
- Struggling infrastructure: social, housing, unemployment
- Disjointed - city and tribes could work together more
- More transparency, more relevant communications to public

- Immediate need with incoming cruise ship (bathrooms, EMS services, Wildlife (land/air/ocean), Trash
- Lack of support from local government for local business
- City is poorly managed, needs new leadership
- Local government poorly communicates with community
- Issue with local government officials not having personal interest or residence in Nome
- Lack of transboundary communications with Chukotka
- Need more housing; need more buildings removed for new homes
- Smaller government
- Tourists from Europe need to be able to buy crafts with marine mammal parts
- What ordinances can the city instate to proactively regulate cruise ship traffic, passenger amount, vessel emission and discharge?
- How will cruise passengers put strain and wear and tear on infrastructure that cannot be covered by passenger fees?

Summary: Lack of communications with Chukotka re: environmental tourism, etc.; local businesses - social/housing/unemployment; City of Nome has poor communications re: port; City and tribal government need to do better communicating/planning; Federal government needs outreach on marine mammal crafts for US/foreign tourists

Table 3, April 24, 2024 Noon

The following is an edited version of notes transcribed by Robert Orttung at the community meeting organized into the main boxes we were using.

Economy

- Hope to have something that is predictable and stable
- Cost of living is too high, home heating fuel and food prices are unaffordable.
- On the other hand, it is true that wages in Nome are high
- People can't afford to live here. Teachers, police are leaving
- Housing is not available
- Two years ago the price of home heating oil doubled from \$3 to \$6. It costs \$4000 to \$5000 a month to heat my house, which is two times the mortgage.

Society

- Want to keep Nome's small town feel
- Would be best if people were able to work where they live
- 50 percent of the people who work in the jail are fly in/fly out. They live in Wasilla. They get a \$150,000 salary in Nome. Many started their careers in the Anchorage area and

then had a chance to get a job in Nome. They get high rural Alaska salaries living here and are able to buy a big house in the Anchorage area.

- Instead of providing new hires with hiring bonuses, employers should give out retention bonuses to keep experienced employees willing to continue to do their jobs incentive to stay in Nome.
- In Nome everybody should feel respected; currently, Alaska native people are not always treated well.
- What happens if Natives get stronger? Will they treat non-natives well?
- Some individuals do not do enough to get ahead themselves
- We need to improve the education system here and would be glad to have the support of non-natives for that
- People should follow the golden rule
- In the elementary schools there are new immersion native language programs, but unfortunately the two teachers in this program did not renew their contracts for the next academic year.
- It is important to teach culture to the kids. The religious missionaries took a lot of this away when they came into our area.
- The governor is cutting the education system and teachers are leaving.
- Often the focus is on developing the railbelt area with a lack of support for the rural areas

Government

- A key is to have strong checks and balances
- There needs to be strong local and regional coordination. Currently, there is an overall lack of coordination among the different governments and jurisdictions in the area.
- For example, in the past Nome did not accept the waste that was generated outside of its borders. We need to have all these systems work together - that would help facilitate more business and generate more revenue
- The Bering Intergovernmental Tribal Advisory Council (BITAC) is now becoming more active. It was created by Obama, disappeared under Trump, and was restored by Biden. Members were in Washington, DC last week. They were working with the Bering Task Force. The current priority is the salmon resilience plan - trying to figure out what can be done and how it will be possible to fund these efforts. In the future, BITAC will work on a much broader range of issues. In particular, it should develop strong tribal-industry cooperation.
- Recommendation to use the services of Michael Fredericks at [SALT](#) for thinking about the future of Nome. Her company facilitates collaboratory design processes
- Greater use of traditional knowledge alongside scientific knowledge

- Nome should, for example, accept the waste coming off of the cruise ships and charge a fee for disposing of it properly.
- Eventually, there should be a borough established here that would facilitate these kinds of services.
- One participant noted that his family lives 11 miles outside of town, which means that they cannot vote in city elections or for the school board
- All of Front Street needs to be revitalized and there should be a plan for a new downtown
- Nome also needs easy beach access, such as exists with the Kotzebue promenade
- Some buildings in town have been vacant for 20 years. They should be renovated or replaced.

Port and the Future of the City

1. There are mixed feelings in town about the port, with no overwhelming consensus one way or the other. People see both the benefits and costs of the new construction.
2. There will always be some individuals calling for isolation
3. Nome is currently a hospital town. I want Nome to be more than just a hospital and port town.
4. I want Nome to be a center of research, with strong educational facilities. Nome could have it all.
5. Our port is very important for the nation given the geopolitical context
6. There are no safe harbors north of here.
7. Mining has been a part of Nome's economy since the city was founded. Gold mining will not disappear.
8. I want Nome to be a hub and to really develop that role.
9. The Alaska Marine Highway system ferries should come to Nome at least once a year. We should have barges on a regular basis. Currently there is only one barge company left. That way we could barge in vehicles for \$1500 rather than \$5000
10. It is crucial that we get cheaper services
11. We need a Costco or something similar. People from out the villages would come here to shop (they do that now, but a Costco would greatly increase traffic)
12. We also need logistics facilities here so that goods can be shipped to Nome, reorganized and then shipped out to the villages.
13. Many houses are now being built in Anchorage and then shipped up here.
14. A key question is what will the port construction mean for the marine wildlife? [Arctic Watch](#) will help with that.

Graphite One Mine

- A key concern is acid water from the mine flowing into the Imuruk Basin potentially injuring the red salmon there. Something similar happened in Butte, Montana
- The amount of truck traffic in town is also a major concern.
- Since the old bypass has now been incorporated into town, it is not clear how the trucks would reach the port without going through the city.

Environment

- The goal is to have minimal environmental impacts in order to keep subsistence food supplies for our people
- Russian fisheries interfere with our subsistence food supplies.

Table 1, April 25, at 6pm

Current situation

- Man camps
- Tourists just walking in streets, we don't have decent walking paths
- currently no public restrooms for tourists
- Cruise ships disturbing subsistence
- City of Nome doesn't seem to have plans for infrastructure \$ and responsibility
- Cruise ship passengers emptying our store shelves
- Cruise ship trash being dumped here
- Sewage waste from cruise ships
- Growing rumblings about crime or people missing
- Negative and harmful impacts due to climate change
- Substance use /abuse problems

Future

- Economic development and opportunity in the community
- Port development ultimately benefiting Nome and the region
- Preservation of culture
- Opportunity for kids, want healthy happy young people
- Better roads condition
- Avenues for local collaboration and creativity
- Stronger internet
- Food Truck areas like in Fairbanks
- Tourism and construction focus in secondary school so we have our own people working here
- Inupiat signage
- A dog park or dome for bringing dogs in bad weather
- Biking and walking trails
- Bike rentals more car rentals, more housing

- Indigenous and local voices needing policies
- Caring law enforcement who looks out for my kids & my safety
- Thriving environment for subsistence
- Child care
- More eco-tourism
- More housing
- Affordable housing
- More people/ families healing from substance abuse
- Outdoor fields to play in summertime
- Economic Development that has a sustained, positive impact on local people
- Revitalized Front Street, if it makes sense to do so
- Diversified housing options and prices
- Murals
- City bus loop
- Assisted living facility
- Port industry that supports the city.

Table 2 April 25, at 6pm

Concerns:

- More industry opportunities will lead to more money/higher incomes, this can lead to more people moving into town. Long term residents may not be able to afford housing, as cost of living may increase further than it already has.
- Income stratification stressing families and services, such as schools or nonprofits not being able to compete with corporate wages
- Lack of structure or way to hear from the broader community. This creates a divide and lack of support.
- Graphite One-- too much risk and not enough benefit
- Increased military presence, creates a potential target on Nome
- Infrastructure being overtaxed-- insufficient for potential growth
- Infrastructure such as water/sewer/roads/electric not being adequate currently
- Is what we have now good enough?
- ROADS
- Safety
- Housing
- Lack of/poor leadership for many local entities
- Environmental
 - Decrease in subsistence food, such as from changed migration or availability
 - IPOP mine hurting the ecosystem
- Properties needing abatement
- Port maintenance
- Property taxes
- Getting priced out of homes
- Unable to live on income

- Decreases in school staffing
- Poorly staffed police department-- not many trained, limited permanent staff
- Figureheads making 6 figures
- No housing for the people who live here long term
- Unknown uses for the deep water port
- Airport-- too small, doesn't support fluctuation of traffic

Future

- more assessments from community (point of view) (region)
- more transparency from involved / leading entities in region
- better roads, improve overall infrastructure
- Housing affordability, more for teachers, law enforcement
- More accountability from camps
- Options for commercial businesses, restaurants, health care, groceries.
- Lower construction costs and fuel
- Larger harbor
- More funding and support from environmental catastrophes
- More action/activity from city leaders/elected officials
- Sober center
- Front Street actually be a visually appealing and welcoming place unsafe weather, a safe place for homeless
- Better seawall that can prevent and improve after flooding events
- Dog park
- More sidewalks
- Minimal pollution
- Minimal pollution
- Minimal marine traffic pollution disturbance
- Invasive species
- Subsistence animals - salmon, waterfowl, crab, this region's subsistence abilities
- Local priority for residents
- NO to IPOP
- People drawing 6 figures making decision in region need to live here full time
- Concerns about roads, infrastructure, water sewer
- Funding for future weather events, storms will wipe out seawall, front street. May damage to port
- Subsistence protections
- Protection from invasive species
- Meaningful participation in city Government by full community
- All Bering Strait Region communities represented in decision
- Funding for social services, school, legal services.

Table 3 April 25 6pm

- Lack of a work ethic; people get tired of jobs
- Fly in/fly out people take their money out of Nome
- Lack of transparency, trust with local government (police, city); lack of direction
- Cost to property owners; Do I have to leave town because I can no longer afford to live here?
- There will be lots of traffic on NE side, could be harmful
- Have nuclear monitoring devices
- High latitude, Green attitude. It all starts with a thought
- VPSO training center, training for cops
- Look for win-win situation, blend ideas [from settler and Indigenous communities]
- Make meditation parks from small bits of land that the city owns
- Should Nome be bigger or stay small? People keep cycling through
- Set up Ada Blackjack State Park, just change the name of the existing park
- We need a big map of the city downtown so that we can envision the future of the city
- Hospital personnel from all over
- Remove divide between White, Native
- More blending: Nome started mostly with White, Natives came in, now we need to blend
- Nome should be more family friendly
- Medical area should also provide teaching services to the villages
- Nome needs to get spirit back
- After 3 years of COVID, we need a restart
- Economy is slow
- Port safety for shipping
- safety for community w/ influx of people
- Mine is far away
- Hard to bring changes to fruition
- Pipeline made big changes
- Fishing trawlers are a concern
- Kiewit Corp. did maintain roads
- Lots of worker camps outside of town
- Want to have more jobs
- People don't get involved in public life
- More training opportunities
- Police are 2 on and 2 off, not in community, same in hospital
- More Natives get on ships as they come into Nome

Table 4 April 25 6pm

Concerns

- Salmon runs decreased, smaller fish
- Accessibility for disabled citizens

- Lack of teachers
- Snow removal-- city currently makes snow lanes and the state cleans
- Road conditions-- too dusty, potholes
- Alaska is a young state, knowledge about finances is simply not there
- Algal blooms and their impact
- Ship traffic
- Bering sea regulations
- Is the city of Nome prepared to handle the pumped out waste, as well as solid waste
- Lack of housing
- Infrastructure in place to bus/transport people around Nome
- Good workers are hard to find. We have traveling nurses that come, earn money, then leave-- affects local business.
- How much will water level rise with the rising temperatures?
- Infrastructure
- Maintenance costs for infrastructure to meet the surge in use?
- Maintenance costs falling on residents when the infrastructure is created for a larger transient population
- Sea ice decreasing
- Corrupt government-- federal and local city officials
- Walking distances to quality things to do
- Homelessness hanging out on Front Street (different from downtown)
- IPOP concerns

Future

- Positive role models for children, in sports and other extracurricular activities
- Building and maintaining Indigenous cultural narrative
- Community agreements with mining, tourism that benefit community maintaining and building a healthy community identity
- Larger airport terminal
- Tourism that intersects with regular life
- City of Nome being able to handle the increase in waste esp. with port and fuel expansions
- More cultural community events
- Larger birth of tribal governance participation/involvement
- Food security
- Food sovereignty
- Protection of subsistence rights
- Elevation of buildings for flooding
- Boardwalk
- More city cleanup prior to arrival of cruise ships
- Build a new boardwalk for tourist activities
- Nome Alaska Lounge, second floor to airport
- What can Nome do to best capitalize on increased tourist activities that benefit the community?

- Locally owned businesses
- Opportunities for locals to interact with cruise ship tours
- More elections/shorter terms for city officials
- Community government jobs
- Forensic auditing of all local government offices
- Northern Bering Sea Intergovernmental Tribal Advisory Council

NCRC Researchers (*present at the April 24-25, 2024 workshops):

*Bella Block, Graduate Research Assistant, University of Alaska Anchorage
 Laura Landrum, Research Professor, National Center for Atmospheric Research

*Robert Orttung, Professor of Sustainability and International Affairs,
 George Washington University

*Julio Postilo, Assistant Professor, Geography Department, Indiana University

*Jim Powell, Assistant Research Professor, Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center,
 University of Alaska Southeast

Olga Povoroznyuk, Post Doctoral Researcher, University of Vienna

Jennifer Schmidt, Associate Professor, Institute of Economic and Social Center,
 University of Alaska Anchorage

Peter Schweitzer, Professor, Dir. Austrian Polar Research Institute, University of Vienna

*Asikluk Topkok, Associate Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

*Hannah Zimmerman, Undergraduate Research Assistant, University of Alaska Fairbanks